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ABSTRACT

The juvenile justice system is exploring alternatives to the use of secure facilities as a means of juvenile crime control. Some of these alternatives are known as diversion programs. This bulletin offers an overview of the diversion programs and evaluation findings from the Detention Diversion Advocacy Project (DDAP), a disposition case advocacy program operated in San Francisco, California, under the auspices of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. Diversion is an attempt to divert, or channel, youthful offenders from the juvenile justice system. The concept behind the DDAP approach is disposition case advocacy, the efforts of lay persons or nonlegal experts acting on behalf of youthful offenders at disposition hearings. The case management model provides frequent and consistent support and supervision to youth and their families. The evaluation of the DDAP program concentrated on 271 youthful offenders in DDAP and 271 comparisons. Findings suggest that, if recidivism is the key measure of success, youth referrals to DDAP have been more successful than those not referred. Data from the study do suggest that the risk scores developed for study participants are, in themselves, relatively poor predictors of outcome. However, when one puts the accuracy of the risk scores aside, findings still show that DDAP accepted youth, who might otherwise have been in detention for days or weeks, had recidivism rates that were nearly 50% less than the comparison group. These findings support the idea that intensive supervision over time, coupled with placement in community-based programs, enables the DDAP youth to lead relatively normal lives and reduce the likelihood of further contact with the juvenile justice system. (Contains 9 tables and 51 references.) (SLD)

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Shay Bilchik, Administrator
September 1999
JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Detention Diversion Advocacy: An Evaluation

Randall G. Shelden

Juvenile delinquency continues to be viewed as a major social problem, especially in recent years, as more and more young people join gangs and engage in violence. The solutions being offered by many politicians and criminal justice officials are variations on punitive models of crime control, emphasizing greater use of incarceration and the certification of delinquents as adults.

This approach contributed to the overcrowding of most corrections institutions nationwide, at both the adult level and the juvenile level (Krisberg and Austin, 1993), in spite of research demonstrating that a punitive approach to delinquency may be nonproductive and create more problems (Lemert, 1951; Schur, 1971; Schwartz, 1989; Krisberg and Austin, 1993; Miller, 1998).

Another consequence of this more punitive approach is greater proportions of minorities being incarcerated within the juvenile corrections system (Krisberg and Austin, 1993; Pope and Feyerherm, 1993; Wordes, Bynum, and Corley, 1994). The study by Wordes, Bynum, and Corley (1994) is especially relevant because the researchers addressed the specific issue of minority overrepresentation in detention populations. Their analysis of data from five counties in Michigan revealed that even when variables such as offense and prior records were considered, minority youth were more likely than nonminority youth to be detained.

In view of the above observations, the juvenile justice system is exploring alternatives to the use of secure facilities, as appropriate. Some of these alternatives have come to be known as diversion programs. This Bulletin offers an overview of diversion programs and evaluation findings from the Detention Diversion Advocacy Project (DDAP), a disposition case advocacy program operated in San Francisco, CA, and sponsored by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ).

Diversion Programs: An Overview

Diversion is "an attempt to divert, or channel out, youthful offenders from the juvenile justice system" (Bynum and Thompson, 1996:430). The concept of diversion is based on the theory that processing certain youth through the juvenile justice system may do more harm than good (Lundman, 1993). The basis of the diversion argument is that courts may inadvertently stigmatize some youth for having committed relatively petty acts that might best be handled outside the formal system. In part, diversion programs are also designed to ameliorate

From the Administrator

Between 1993 and 1997, juvenile arrests for murder have declined 39 percent, and the juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations has dropped 23 percent. Yet despite such downturns, law enforcement agencies still made 2.8 million arrests of persons under age 18 in 1997.

Indeed, the number of juvenile arrests is straining the Nation's justice system beyond capacity, and nowhere is this more evident than detention. By 1996, 320,900 delinquency cases involved detention, 87,200 of which involved person offenses. One result has been crowding in juvenile detention facilities. The 1995 Children in Custody census revealed that half of all public juvenile detention centers were operating above their design capacity. This impacts the juvenile justice system's ability to provide for the safety of juveniles in custody and the public and to use detention as an opportunity to identify and respond to the short-term needs of juvenile offenders.

Diverting appropriate youthful offenders from detention can pay dividends for youth who are not a danger to themselves and for those remaining in detention. *Detention Diversion Advocacy: An Evaluation* shows how one program has benefited from a carefully designed and implemented diversion strategy.

Shay Bilchik
Administrator

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The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice

The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ) is a private nonprofit organization whose mission is to reduce society's reliance on incarceration as a solution to social problems. CJCJ provides programs to persons facing prison, educates the public about the effects of imprisonment, and provides technical assistance to jurisdictions wishing to establish model programs for offender populations.

CJCJ maintains a staff of professionals with diverse backgrounds and expertise in various components of the criminal and juvenile justice field. As part of its commitment to reform, CJCJ incorporates exoffenders on its board and staff. CJCJ, which has offices in San Francisco, CA; Washington, DC; and Baltimore, MD, is recognized nationally as a leading innovator in the juvenile and criminal justice fields.

the problem of overburdened juvenile courts and overcrowded corrections institutions (including detention facilities), so that courts and institutions can focus on more serious offenders.

Diversionary tactics have a strong theoretical background that is based on "labeling" principles that initially evolved from Tannenbaum (1938), who wrote on the "dramatization of evil," to Becker's (1963) notion that social groups create deviance by labeling certain acts as "deviant" and treating individuals who commit those acts as "outsiders," to Lemert's (1951) classic statements about labeling leading to "secondary deviance." Thus, legal intervention by the juvenile justice system may actually perpetuate delinquency by processing cases of children and youth whose misbehavior might be remedied more appropriately in informal settings within the community.

Partly in response to the issues raised by the labeling perspective, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice report (1967) called for the creation of youth services bureaus to develop alternative programs for juvenile offenders within local communities. The establishment of these bureaus, which quickly appeared in most communities, began a movement toward diverting youth, especially status offenders and nonserious delinquents, from the juvenile court.

The concept of the youth services bureaus, however, was ambiguous. Gibbons and Krohn (1991:313) observed, "For one thing, the recommendation that community services be coordinated by the bureau assumed that there was a wealth of services to be coordinated when, in fact, the lack of such agencies and services had been an impediment to successful juvenile court work."

It should not be surprising, therefore, that conflicting expectations, findings, and conclusions would emerge from such a widespread, disjointed, and complicated social experiment. Although many studies show that diversion programs are successful in reducing subsequent deviance, these studies are balanced by studies that find no impact. In certain cases, diversion programs were found to have detrimental properties (Polk, 1995).

Research

Proponents of diversion, however, cite studies such as one in Colorado that involved comparisons between an experimental group of diverted youth and a control group who received regular handling by the juvenile justice system. The diversion program administered individual, parental, and/or family counseling to the diverted youth group, resulting in significantly lower recidivism rates than in the control group (Pogrebin, Poole, and Regoli, 1984; see also Frazier and Cochran, 1986; Gilbert, 1977).

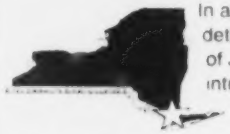
A large-scale diversion program in Michigan, the Adolescent Diversion Project (Davidson et al., 1990), included juveniles accused of serious criminal acts and juveniles with status offenses. The study concluded that diversion can be safely extended beyond status and minor offenders. Although most of the offenders in the program admitted to criminal acts, the diversion programs reported lower recidivism rates than those reported for normal court-processed cases.

The most successful diversion programs have been those that provide more intensive and comprehensive services (Dryfoos, 1990). The use of experienced youth caseworkers is especially important to a program's success. For example, a program in St. Louis, MO, found that experienced youth caseworkers engendered greater behavioral changes in the youth than did less experienced caseworkers (Feldman, Caplinger, and Wodarski, 1983).

Opponents of diversionary programs cite studies that show diversion programs are unsuccessful (Rojek and Erickson, 1982). An analysis of a police diversion program found that diversion appeared to aggravate rather than deter recidivism (Lincoln, 1976). Elliott, Dunford, and Knowles (1978) found that intervention, whether received in a traditional juvenile justice setting or in an alternative program, resulted in an increase in levels of perceived labeling and self-reported delinquency among youth. Two other studies supported this finding (Lincoln, 1976; Lipsey, Cordray, and Berger, 1981). Other concerns raised about diversion programs include those related to prejudice, discrimination, civil rights violations, and the issue of net widening.

Many other projects and institutions throughout the country work with youth and detention diversion. Some examples of these follow.

Spofford Detention Center Project—New York, NY



In an attempt to relieve overcrowding in juvenile detention, New York City created the Department of Juvenile Justice in 1979. Subsequent changes introduced to reduce the use of secure detention included the development of a case management system for each youth detained, which viewed the period in which the youth was detained as an opportunity to identify various needs (e.g., medicine and education). Through the case management system, a computer-based system was created whereby information about each youth was organized. Today, the case management system uses a volunteer aftercare program through which the youth and his or her family receive needed assistance after the youth's release from detention.

Over the years, New York City's Spofford Detention Center was replaced by two smaller secure facilities plus various nonsecure options. Through such a system, the so-called dead time of youth awaiting court hearings is reduced, thereby making it possible to meet crucial needs of these youth (who come primarily from deprived neighborhoods). The program has received acclaim for excellence in the management of public facilities from organizations such as the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government (Krisberg and Austin, 1993).

The Key Program, Inc.—Boston, MA

The Key Program uses a case management approach in which adjudicated youth are monitored on a 24-hour basis and must conform to strict rules in areas such as work, school, counseling, and victim restitution. The program was initiated by the State's commissioner of youth services in 1970 as a summer program for offenders from area reform schools. During the program's first summer, a small group of offenders participated in activities such as tutoring sessions and field trips to the Harvard University campus. The Key Program eventually became full time, and college students (primarily from Harvard University) would supervise youthful offenders, visiting them in their homes, seeing them on weekends, and generally interacting with them on a one-on-one basis. After the program became full time, the students earned college credits and were paid a small wage (Miller, 1998). The program now closely supervises approximately 500 youthful offenders in Massachusetts.

One unique feature of the program is that staff are encouraged to seek other jobs after 12 to 14 months of service in order to prevent "burnout" (Krisberg and Austin, 1993).

Associated Marine Institutes—Florida (Statewide)

A case management system has been in use in Florida through the Associated Marine Institutes (AMI) (Krisberg and Austin, 1993). AMI consists of various programs for youthful offenders. Through this system, most youth live either at home or with foster parents. During the day, they are involved in various AMI-sponsored programs, such as training in boat repair and marine biology. Through activities such as mentoring and tutoring, AMI's education program helps the youth complete their high school educations. An evaluation of AMI's program found that its graduates do just as well if not better than youth in other Florida diversion programs (Krisberg and Austin, 1993).

As an alternative to more traditional forms of incarceration, AMI also operates a residential wilderness program known as the Florida Environmental Institute. In this program, you... are involved in work such as taking care of plants and animals, hauling logs, and doing repair work in the Florida Everglades, where the secluded environment prevents escapes and, therefore, reduces the need for high-tech security devices (Krisberg and Austin, 1993).

The RAND Corporation—Los Angeles, CA

Additional evidence in support of case advocacy is reflected in a study by the RAND Corporation (Greenwood and Turner, 1991). The RAND study compared two groups of randomly selected youth: a control group that consisted of youth who were recommended by their probation officers for incarceration and an experimental group that consisted of youth for whom dispositional reports had been prepared by case advocates. Of youth who received case advocacy disposition reports, 72 percent were diverted from institutional care, compared with 49 percent of the control group. The study also revealed resistance from juvenile justice officials, especially probation officers, to alternative dispositions, especially those originating with case advocates. It appeared that probation staff may have perceived intrusion into an area that had previously been considered their own "turf" (Greenwood and Turner, 1991).

CJCJ's Oak Hill Youth Center Depopulation Project—Washington, DC

The Oak Hill Youth Center Depopulation Project is a case management and advocacy project located in Washington, DC, that designs and implements case planning and advocacy for preadjudication hearings. The project is designed to ensure public safety through comprehensive tracking and to ensure each youth's court appearance. Through multilevel interventions, the project seeks to demonstrate that community-based interventions are an effective alternative to secure custody. The project employs a three-part referral process through the judiciary, defense attorneys, and Youth Services Administration. Youth are not rejected from the program based solely on the alleged offense.

Once identified, youth are interviewed and assessed to determine their potential for success; factors considered include living arrangements, support services, and past behavior. After youth are assessed and accepted, a comprehensive community treatment plan is immediately developed. Case plans include current offense and social background summaries along with detailed release recommendations. Should the court adopt the community treatment plan, the youth is released to participate in the program. Thereafter, CJCJ case managers implement the case plan through differential levels of monitoring and supervision.

Net Widening

Net widening is a term most commonly used to describe a phenomenon whereby a program is set up to divert youth away from an institutional placement or some other type of juvenile court disposition but, instead, merely brings more youth into the juvenile justice system who previously would never have entered. Instead of shrinking the "net" of social control, one actually "widens" it to bring more in.

A true diversion program takes youth who would ordinarily be processed within the juvenile justice system and places them, instead, into an alternative program. If 1,000 youth are normally processed within the system, a true diversion would take, for example, 300 of those youth and place them in alternative programs. Net widening would occur, however, if the alternative programs served 300 additional youth who were not part of the original 1,000 that were normally processed. Therefore, instead of dealing with a total of 1,000 youth (i.e., 300 in diversion programs and 700 within the juvenile justice system), the system is processing 1,300 (1,000 plus 300). A "net gain" or a "net widening" of 300 youth has occurred.

If diversion is to work effectively, youth must be diverted from the system rather than be caught up in a net-widening process. This issue becomes especially important when dealing with the ever-increasing problem of overcrowding within the detention centers of the juvenile justice system. When a particular detention center is plagued by chronic overcrowding, the solution is to either increase the space available (e.g., add rooms to the current structure or build a new one) or to remove a certain percentage of youth from that facility and place them in an alternative facility or program.

Constitutionality and Differential Treatment

Two additional issues related to diversion programs are constitutionality and charges of differential treatment based on race/ethnicity. For example, Bullington et al. (1978) found evidence of "disposition without adjudication" (i.e., final resolution of a case without formal court action by a judge). Bortner, Sunderland, and Winn (1985) found evidence of systematic differential treatment of African Americans; African American females, for instance, were more likely to be incarcerated for status offenses while their Caucasian counterparts were more likely to be diverted elsewhere.

Minority youth also far outnumber Caucasian youth among those incarcerated on any given day (Krisberg and Austin, 1993). This issue of racial/ethnic disproportion is a national problem. For example, minority youth constituted 52 percent of the total incarcerated juvenile population in 1985, 60 percent in 1989, and 65 percent in 1995. This cannot be attributed merely to the fact that minority youth stand a greater chance of being arrested; minorities fare worse than Caucasians at each subsequent stage of processing by the juvenile justice system. Regardless of the charge, minorities are more likely to be detained and sentenced to a corrections facility than are Caucasians (see Fagan, Slaughter, and Hartstone, 1987).

Nationally, in addition to the high levels of minority incarcerations, youth in the juvenile justice system often reflect a variety of high-risk elements that include inadequate family support, school failure, negative peer associations, and insufficient utilization of community-based services. Because most adjudicated youth released from secure detention do not have community followup or supervision, risk factors remain unaddressed (Dryfoos, 1990).

The Detention Diversion Advocacy Program: An Overview

The impetus for establishing DDAP in San Francisco was, in part, that the city's juvenile detention system had been the focus of criticism for the past 40 years. Since 1951, a series of reports documented the city's overuse of detention and its failure to develop suitable alternative options. The three most recent reports were completed by a local community research agency, Jefferson and Associates, in 1987; the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) in 1988 (Steinhart and Steele, 1988); and CJCJ in 1994 (Hewitt, Shorter, and Godfrey, 1994).

The NCCD study noted that because of the absence of alternatives, San Francisco had a secure detention rate that ranked third in the State (Steinhart and Steele, 1988). The same study found that 63 percent of all referrals to the juvenile court were African American youth—far in excess of their proportion relative to the general population. The study by CJCJ found that the overall incarceration rate for African American males in San Francisco was 8,331 per 100,000 African Americans, compared with a rate of 3,822 per 100,000 African Americans for the Nation (Hewitt, Kubota, and Schiraldi, 1992; Hewitt, Shorter, and Godfrey, 1994). A significant reason for the high rate of incarceration was the absence of intermediate alternatives.

Overuse of detention has been attributed partly to failure of probation department staff to consider alternative options at the time a youth is taken into custody. Indeed, the juvenile probation department in San Francisco has consistently recommended detention in the majority of its cases; one study found a 77-percent detention rate (Steinhart and Steele, 1988); Macallair (1994) provides a similar report.

As demonstrated in other jurisdictions, however, when community agencies are present to advocate for alternatives to detention, secure custody rates decline. A study conducted in the mid-1980's by the

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services found that advocacy by community agencies on behalf of youth at detention hearings leads to significant reductions in detention rates. When advocacy is combined with intensive case management, youth receive a range of quality services (Krisberg et al., 1988; Austin et al., 1991).

DDAP's funding under San Francisco's 1992–93 Children's Services Plan—a plan resulting from a referendum for San Francisco requiring that 1 percent of city taxes be reserved for children's services—covered startup costs and initial collaboration with five San Francisco agencies: CJCJ, Horizons Unlimited, OMI (Ocean View, Merced Heights, and Ingleside, CA) Pilgrim Community Center, the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, and the Vietnamese Youth Development Center. Subsequent participants have included the city's juvenile probation department, the public defender's office, the San Francisco Education Services Corporation, the Log Cabin Ranch aftercare program, and the Omega Boys Club.

Disposition Case Advocacy

The concept behind the DDAP approach is disposition case advocacy, defined as "the efforts of lay persons or nonlegal experts acting on behalf of youthful offenders at disposition hearings" (Macallair, 1994:84). Disposition case advocacy is based in part on the more general concept of case management, defined as a "client-level strategy for promoting the coordination of human services, opportunities, or benefits" (1994:84). Case management seeks to integrate services across a cluster of organizations, to ensure continuity of care, and to facilitate development of client skills (e.g., job interviewing and reading and writing skills) by involving a variety of social networks and service providers (e.g., social agencies that provide specific services to youth such as drug counseling and crisis intervention) (Moxley, 1989).

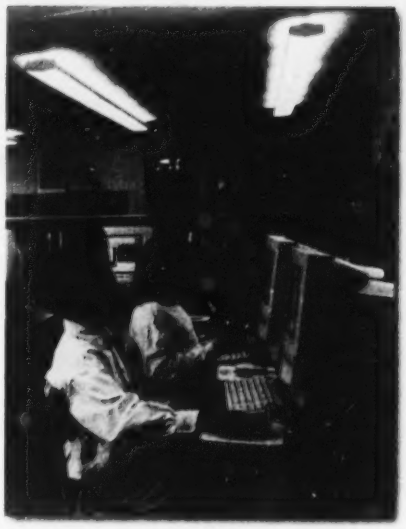
Detention advocacy involves identifying youth likely to be detained pending their adjudication. Once a potential client is identified, DDAP case managers present a release plan to the judge that includes a list of appropriate community services (e.g., tutoring, drug counseling, and family counseling) that will be accessed on the youth's behalf. Additionally, the plan includes specified objectives (e.g., improved grades, victim restitution, and drug-free status) as a means to evaluate the youth's progress in the program. Emphasis is placed on allowing the youth to live at home while going through the program. If home placement is not a viable option, program staff will identify and secure a suitable alternative. If the judge deems the release plan acceptable, the youth is released to DDAP supervision.

The case management model provides frequent and consistent support and supervision to youth and their families. Case managers link youth to community-based services and closely monitor their progress. DDAP requires the case manager to have daily contact with the youth, his or her family, and significant others, including a minimum of three in-person meetings a week with the youth. The youth's family members, particularly parents and guardians, are provided with additional services that typically include assistance in securing employment, daycare, drug treatment services, and income support (e.g., food stamps).

Client Selection Process

DDAP clients are identified primarily through referrals from the city's public defender's office, the probation department, community agencies, and parents. Admission to DDAP is restricted to youth currently held, or likely to be held, in secure detention. Youth selected are those deemed at "high risk" for engaging in subsequent delinquent activity. Selection is based on a risk assessment instrument developed by NCCD that provides a score to help determine the youth's danger to others or to himself or herself and the likelihood that the youth will abscond (Wiebush et al., 1995). The target population is youth whose risk assessment scores indicate that they would ordinarily be detained. This method of selection has been termed the "deep-end" approach (Miller, 1998). This distinction in DDAP's selection process is important, because by focusing on detained youth, the program ensures that it remains a true diversion alternative rather than evolving into a net-widening program. Youth are screened by DDAP staff to determine if they are likely to be detained and whether they present a threat to the community.

Client screening involves gathering background information from probation reports, psychological evaluations, police reports, school reports, and other pertinent documents. Interviews are conducted with youth, family members, and



professionals (e.g., teachers) to determine the types of services required. After evaluating a potential client, DDAP staff present a comprehensive community service plan at the youth's detention hearing and ask the judge to release the youth to DDAP custody.

Because DDAP deals only with youth who are awaiting adjudication or final disposition, the youth's appropriateness for the program is based on DDAP's judgment of whether they are likely to attend their court hearings and whether they can live in the community, under supervision, without unreasonable risk to the community. This practice is similar, in principle, to what occurs in the adult system when an individual is released on bail pending a court hearing (e.g., arraignments and trial).

DDAP designs and implements an individualized community service plan for each youth, addressing a range of personal and social needs such as having positive relationships with others. DDAP staff monitor not only the offender but also the quality and level of services provided by the various social service agencies in San Francisco. Because youth services in San Francisco historically have been fragmented by ethnicity, race, and community, the program seeks to represent and address the needs of youth from the various communities within San Francisco in the most culturally appropriate manner. DDAP offers a more unified approach as a neutral site within the city that is staffed by representatives from CJCJ and other community-based service agencies (e.g.,

Horizons Unlimited, Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, and the Vietnamese Youth Development Center).

Goals and Objectives

The major goals of the DDAP program are to reduce the number of youth in court-ordered detention and provide youth with culturally relevant community-based services and with supervision. DDAP provides an intensive level of community-based monitoring and advocacy not available within the traditional juvenile justice system.

Specific DDAP objectives include the following:

- Ensuring that a high proportion of program clients are not rearrested while participating in the program.
- Ensuring that youth appear in court as scheduled.
- Reducing the population of the Youth Guidance Center (the juvenile court), currently the only place of juvenile detention in the city.
- Providing interventions for youth diverted from secure detention facilities.
- Demonstrating that community-based interventions are an effective alternative to secure custody and can meet the needs of both the youth and the community at a cost savings to the public.
- Reducing disproportionate minority incarceration (including detention).

Data and Sampling Procedures

In 1997, the Youth Guidance Center in San Francisco conducted an outcome evaluation of the DDAP program. The methods of the study employed chi-square statistical analysis. Data were collected from printouts obtained from the San Francisco Department of Juvenile Probation in order to compare a group of DDAP youth with a group of youth who remained within the juvenile court system. Systematic sampling techniques were used to select the comparison group, while the DDAP group was made up of DDAP referrals. The department's printouts showed selected sociodemographic and legal variables (such as the number of prior referrals) for all youth who spent 3 or more days in detention during 1994. Originally, only DDAP referrals during 1994 were to be used (n=189); however, to have a larger sample, additional names were drawn from DDAP referrals during the second half of 1993. Ultimately, 271 DDAP referrals were selected for the DDAP group in the study, and 271 were selected for the comparison group in the study (total n=542). Each printout contained information on referral data, age, race/ethnicity, sex, prior referrals (including the charges), prior risk scores, prior placements, subsequent referrals (including the charges), subsequent placements, and subsequent petitions.

Additional information obtained for the DDAP sample originated from intake forms completed for each DDAP youth. The answers on the forms provided information on the youth's neighborhood, school enrollment status (e.g., the highest grade completed and the number of times expelled or suspended), living arrangements (e.g., whether the youth was living with his or her parents), drug use, and poverty indicators (e.g., living in public housing and receiving welfare assistance).

Group Comparisons: DDAP Group Versus Comparison Group

- **High risk:** Members of the DDAP group were significantly more likely to be considered at high risk than members of the comparison group.
- **Race/ethnicity:** No significant difference.
- **Sex:** 23 percent of the comparison group were females, compared with 16 percent of the DDAP group.
- **Age:** 27 percent of the comparison group were 14 and under, compared with 15 percent of the DDAP group.
- **Prior referrals:** 39 percent of the comparison group had three or more prior referrals, compared with 20 percent of the DDAP group.
- **Prior placement:** 27 percent of the DDAP group had at least one prior placement, compared with 16 percent of the comparison group.
- **Recidivism:**
  - The overall recidivism rate of the DDAP group was 34 percent, compared with 60 percent for the comparison group.
  - Only 14 percent of the DDAP group had two or more subsequent referrals, compared with 50 percent of the comparison group.
  - Only 9 percent of the DDAP group returned to court on a violent crime charge, compared with 25 percent of the comparison group.
  - Only 5 percent of the DDAP group had two or more subsequent petitions, compared with 22 percent of the comparison group.

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Key DDAP Concepts

The dependent variable in the study was recidivism, which was operationally defined as a referral to the juvenile court on a new offense (youth committing technical violations but not charged with a specific delinquent offense were not counted as recidivists) subsequent to the original referral to either DDAP or to the comparison group. Data were not available (because of either time or monetary constraints) on other possible measures of recidivism (e.g., "police contacts" and arrests as an adult). Recidivism was subsequently subdivided into serious recidivists and minor recidivists. Serious recidivists included youth referred to court on felonies or other serious charges (e.g., robbery, murder, burglary, grand theft, and drugs), while minor recidivists included youth who committed misdemeanors (e.g., petty larceny and simple assault). Other measures of recidivism were subsequent petitions to juvenile court and subsequent out-of-home placements.

The nature of previous offenses for youth with prior referrals was included among the independent variables. Previous offenses were categorized as serious violent (e.g., robbery, murder, assault with a deadly weapon, and rape), serious other (e.g., burglary, grand theft, and drugs), minor (e.g., petty larceny, simple assault, and disturbing the peace), and technical (e.g., violating a court order).

Another key independent variable was risk scores, which, for research purposes, were listed on various printouts of data compiled by the juvenile probation department and divided into four major categories: less than 10; 10 to 14; 15 to 19; and 20 or more. During the course of the research, it was discovered that in filling out the "risk assessment" forms, some intake workers stopped adding up the points once a youth reached a score of 10 (the minimum score needed for youth to be detained), so an exact score of 10 could theoretically be a score of 15, 20, or more. Therefore, it was decided to change the categories for this variable to low risk (less than 10) or high risk (10 or more). This method was chosen because, according to the risk assessment form (which was originally designed by NCCD and is used across the country), a score of 10 or more indicates that the youth is a "danger to self or others," is likely to "abscond," or is "without adequate adult supervision"

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the 1994 DDAP Cases

	Percentage	Number
Race/ethnicity (*n*=189)		
Caucasian	12.7%	24
African American	56.1	106
Hispanic	13.2	25
Asian	16.4	31
Other	1.6	3
Sex (*n*=189)		
Male	82.5%	156
Female	17.5	33
Neighborhood (*n*=188)		
Potrero Hill/Bayview Hunter	24.9%	47
Excelsior/Visitacion	14.8	28
Mission	12.7	24
Haight-Ashbury	12.2	23
Ocean View/Merced Heights/Ingleside	6.9	13
Tenderloin	5.8	11
Other	22.2	42
Family (*n*=188)		
Both natural parents	27.0%	51
Mother only	46.0	87
Father only	8.5	16
Other relative	13.2	25
Other	4.7	9
Living arrangements (*n*=188)		
With parent(s)	82.5%	156
Other relative	14.8	28
Other	2.1	4
Highest grade completed (*n*=178)		
8th or lower	14.0%	25
9th	30.3	54
10th	32.6	58
11th	13.5	24
12th	2.2	4
GED	7.3	13
Attending school (*n*=181)		
Yes	53.6%	97
Ever expelled/suspended (*n*=187)		
Yes	24.1%	45
Drug of choice (*n*=187)		
None	46.5%	87
Marijuana	44.9	84
Other	8.6	16
Used the drug in the last 90 days (*n*=187)		
Yes	46.0%	86
Frequency of drug use (*n*=79)		
Daily	32.9%	26
Once a week	19.0	15
Twice a week	43.0	34
Once a month or less	5.1	4
Employed (*n*=189)		
Yes	10.7%	20
Poverty indicator		
Yes	41.5%	78

Note: *n*=the number of referrals. See "Key DDAP Concepts" for an explanation of the variables. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

and, therefore, requires incarceration in a juvenile detention facility (Wiebush et al., 1995).

Evaluation Findings

Sociodemographic Profile

Because more detailed information was available via intake forms for all the youth handled by DDAP during 1994 (the first full year of operation, n=189), a summary of several sociodemographic variables from these cases (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, sex, and family structure) will be reviewed first.

As noted in table 1, the majority of DDAP clients were members of minority groups, with African American youth accounting for 56.1 percent of the sample, Asian and Hispanic youth accounting for 29.6 percent of the group, and Caucasian youth accounting for 12.7 percent of the group. Males accounted for 82.5 percent of the sample, and they tended to come from one of four adjoining neighborhoods in San Francisco: Excelsior/Visitacion, Haight-Ashbury, Mission, and Potrero Hill/Bayview Hunter. One-fourth of all DDAP clients originated from the adjacent neighborhoods of Potrero Hill and Bayview Hunter. Most DDAP clients lived with their mothers in single-parent households. The data also indicate that school was a problem for the DDAP group, as only 53.6 percent were attending school at the time they entered DDAP, and 24.1 percent of the youth had been either expelled or suspended.

Drug use was common, as 53.5 percent of youth had ever used drugs, 46 percent had used drugs at least once during the 90 days prior to DDAP referral, and 32.9 percent used drugs on a daily basis. Marijuana was the most commonly used drug. Most DDAP clients were not employed, and just over 40 percent were living in poverty.

It is significant that for the DDAP group alone, the one variable most strongly associated with recidivism is poverty. This last point is further underscored by the results of a 1990 study that focused on crack cocaine sales in the Bayview area of San Francisco (the area with the highest concentration of DDAP clients) (Bowser, Fullilove, and Fullilove, 1990). The 1990 study found that the heaviest concentration of crack cocaine sales occurred almost exclusively in the poorest housing projects of this community, where residents have been on the margin of the economy since the 1960's. The study also found that this mostly African American community "has been cut off from the city's economic life" (1990:57–63) as the prospects for good jobs have steadily shrunk. The rising rates of drug sales (especially crack) have occurred simultaneously with increases in the incidence of unprotected sex and in cases of sexually transmitted diseases (including AIDS). The study concluded that these problems were influenced by "long-term community economic conditions and opportunities" (1990:57–63). Youth see their parents and neighbors—and themselves—cut off from the surrounding community with little hope for the future.

Table 2: General Comparisons Between the DDAP and Comparison Groups

	Percentage of Youth		
	DDAP Group (n=271)	Comparison Group (n=271)	Level of Significance
Age 14 and under	15.1%	27.3%	p<.001
Minorities	88.9	85.6	NS
Females	15.9	22.9	p<.01
Risk score of 10 or more	84.2	59.4	p<.001
Three or more prior referrals	19.9	38.7	p<.001
Nature of prior offenses			NS
Serious violent offenses	23.2	30.3	
Serious nonviolent offenses	28.4	23.6	
Previous out-of-home placements	27.3	15.5	p<.001
Recidivism			p<.001
Record of recidivism	34.3	60.1	
Record of serious recidivism	23.6	45.8	
Two or more subsequent referrals	14.4	50.2	p<.001
Record of subsequent violent crimes	9.2	24.7	p<.001
Two or more subsequent petitions	5.2	21.5	p<.001
Subsequent placements	18.1	24.0	p<.001

Note: NS, not significant.

How DDAP Group Compares to Comparison Group

Several significant differences were observed between the DDAP group sample and the comparison group sample[1] (see table 2):

- A greater percentage of the comparison group (more than one-fourth) were young (age 14 and under).
- The comparison group had a higher percentage of females. This would lead one to predict a lower recidivism rate for the comparison group, because not only do females have a lower rate of initial criminal involvement than males, but studies have shown that females have a lower overall recidivism rate (Shelden, Horvath, and Tracy, 1989; Shelden and Chesney-Lind, 1991; and Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998).
- DDAP youth were significantly more likely to have risk scores of 10 or more. This would cause one to predict a higher recidivism rate among the DDAP group, which was not the case.
- The comparison group had a higher percentage of youth with three or more previous referrals. This seems to conflict with the lower overall risk scores of the comparison group, since multiple referrals would presumably indicate a strong probability of recidivism and, therefore, risk.

[1] The inconsistency of these observations suggests that there are problems either with the risk instrument itself or with the way the risk instrument was used by staff members.

- No significant differences were found as to the nature of prior offenses between the two groups. Among youth with previous referrals, DDAP and comparison youth were equally likely to have had prior serious offenses.
- The DDAP group was more likely to have had prior placements.

Most of the above differences—except for the number of prior referrals—might lead one to predict a slightly higher recidivism rate among the DDAP group (i.e., more males, higher risk scores, and more prior placements), yet the most significant finding of this study was that the DDAP group had a much lower recidivism rate. In fact, the overall recidivism rate for the comparison group was almost double that for the DDAP group (60 percent versus 34 percent). Moreover, there was a significant difference for the rate of serious recidivism (defined as subsequent referrals for major felonies). Further, the comparison group was more than three times more likely to have two or more subsequent referrals, almost three times more likely to be referred for a violent crime, about four times more likely to have two or more subsequent petitions, and slightly more likely to have subsequent placements. These relationships were statistically significant at the .001 level, except for gender differences ($p<.05$) and subsequent placements (not significant).[2]

Because many youth in the study turned 18 during the followup period, they had no subsequent referrals to juvenile court. Therefore, comparisons were made controlling for age as the primary reason that older youth had a lower recidivism rate. Tables 3 and 4 show that the comparisons between the two groups remained essentially the same: recidivism rates were still significantly higher for the comparison group.

When comparisons were made controlling for additional variables (see table 5), DDAP clients had significantly lower recidivism rates than did the comparison group. For instance, among youth with high risk scores (10 or higher), the overall recidivism rate for DDAP clients was 32.8 percent, compared with 58.4 percent for the comparison group. Similar differences were found for those with low risk scores

[2] It should be noted that among the entire comparison group of youth referred to the court during 1994, the overall recidivism rate was 58 percent, remarkably close to the rate for the sample as a whole. The overall rate of subsequent petitions was 50 percent, also remarkably close to the rate for the sample as a whole.

Table 3: Group Comparisons for Youth Referred to DDAP, Age 14 and Under

	Percentage of Youth		
	DDAP Group	Comparison Group	Level of Significance
Minorities	87.8%	90.5%	NS
Females	26.8	31.1	NS
Risk score of 10 or more	83.3	47.3	$p<.01$
Three or more prior referrals	9.8	35.1	$p<.001$
Nature of prior offenses			NS
Serious violent offenses	22.0	21.6	
Serious nonviolent offenses	24.4	24.3	
Previous out-of-home placements	17.1	10.8	NS
Recidivism			$p<.001$
Record of recidivism	43.9	74.3	
Record of serious recidivism	31.7	63.5	
Two or more subsequent referrals	17.1	63.5	$p<.001$
Record of subsequent violent crimes	24.4	40.5	NS
Two or more subsequent petitions	2.4	32.4	$p<.001$
Subsequent placements	26.8	31.1	NS

Note: Number of referrals: 115. NS, not significant

Table 4: Group Comparisons for Youth Referred to DDAP, Age 15 and Older

	Percentage of Youth		
	DDAP Group	Comparison Group	Level of Significance
Minorities	89.1%	83.8%	NS
Females	13.9	19.8	NS
Risk score of 10 or more	87.0	64.0	$p<.01$
Three or more prior referrals	21.7	40.1	$p<.001$
Nature of prior offenses			NS
Serious violent offenses	23.5	33.5	
Serious nonviolent offenses	29.1	23.4	
Previous out-of-home placements	29.1	17.3	$p<.01$
Recidivism			$p<.001$
Record of recidivism	32.6	54.8	
Record of serious recidivism	22.2	39.1	
Two or more subsequent referrals	13.9	45.2	$p<.001$
Record of subsequent violent crimes	6.5	18.8	$p<.001$
Two or more subsequent petitions	5.7	17.3	$p<.001$
Subsequent placements	16.5	21.3	NS

Note: Number of referrals: 427. NS, not significant.

Table 5: Recidivism Rates of DDAP and Comparison Groups, by Selected Variables

	Percentage of Youth		
	DDAP Group	Comparison Group	Level of Significance
Risk score			
High (10 or more)	32.8%	58.4%	$p<.001$
Low (less than 10)	31.4	62.7	$p<.02$
Number of prior referrals			
Three or more	50.0	70.5	$p<.02$
None	25.0	43.0	$p<.01$
Number of previous out-of-home placements			
One or more	33.8	66.7	$p<.001$
None	34.5	58.8	$p<.001$
Nature of prior offenses			
Serious nonviolent offenses	42.1	70.5	$p<.001$
Serious violent offenses	42.9	68.3	$p<.01$
Minor offenses	28.1	69.0	$p<.01$
African Americans	38.5	66.4	$p<.001$
Sex			
Males	35.1	63.6	$p<.001$
Females	30.2	48.4	NS
Age			
15 and over	32.6	54.8	$p<.001$
14 and under	43.9	74.3	$p<.001$

Note: Number of referrals: 542. NS, not significant.

(under 10). The highest recidivism rates for the DDAP group (50.0 percent) were found among those with three or more referrals, considerably lower than the comparable rate for the comparison group (70.5 percent).

Perhaps the most interesting finding presented in table 5 is that for youth for whom one would normally predict a low rate of recidivism (e.g., females and those with low risk scores, no previous referrals, no prior placements, and minor previous offenses), recidivism rates were higher among the comparison group. This finding was statistically significant for all variables except sex; however, for females the difference between the DDAP group and the comparison group was substantial. For three of the variables (including low risk score), the recidivism rate for the comparison group was double that of the DDAP group. This lends support to the theory that when a youth who has a low potential for further delinquency is detained in the juvenile justice system, the probability for future delinquency is exacerbated (Becker, 1963; Schwartz, 1989; Schur, 1971).

Table 6 breaks down these rates further, comparing recidivism rates by risk scores for the two groups. The rate for serious recidivists was consistently higher among the comparison group for most of the variables noted here. Thus, 44 percent of the high-risk comparison group were serious recidivists, compared with only 23 percent of the DDAP group. More critical was the finding that among low-risk groups only 13 percent of DDAP youth were serious recidivists, compared with 49 percent of the comparison group. In other words, not only was the recidivism rate consistently higher among the comparison group, but the youth from the comparison group who did return to the juvenile justice system were far more likely to return on a more serious charge, even when they were considered to be "low risk" (see tables 2–4).

Other Measures of Recidivism

Although the preceding analysis measures recidivism in terms of any subsequent referral to juvenile court for new offenses, recidivism can be measured in many ways. Other measures include subsequent petitions to juvenile court, subsequent referrals to juvenile court for violent offenses, and subsequent placements outside the home.

Subsequent petitions could be considered a much better measure of success or failure, because many referrals are never petitioned to court for more formal hearings. One could conclude that petitioned cases are the most serious or those with the most evidence and that cases not petitioned to court are not serious enough to warrant further court action or have little or no evidence.

When subsequent petitions are used as a measure of recidivism, as shown in table 7, the differences between the DDAP group and the comparison group remain significant. Only 23.6 percent of the DDAP group had at least one subsequent petition, compared with 47.8 percent of the comparison group. Recidivism rates were significantly higher among youth age 14 and under and among males who had three or more prior referrals or the most serious prior referrals. The variables of race/ethnicity, prior placements, and risk scores did not correlate with subsequent petitions.

Another possible measure of recidivism is subsequent referral to court on a charge of violence (see table 8). Once again, differences between the DDAP group and the comparison group surfaced. The differences were more dramatic for this measure than for subsequent petitions: the comparison group was almost three times more likely than the DDAP group to return to court on a charge of violence. Of youth age 14 and under, 34.8 percent had subsequent referrals for violent offenses, compared with only 12.2 percent of older youth. Differences between Caucasian and African American youth in the DDAP group and the comparison group were negligible, and rates for these two groups were significantly higher than those for other racial/ethnic groups. The greater the number of prior referrals and the more serious the prior referrals, the greater the likelihood of recidivism on a charge of violence.

A final measure of recidivism considered is subsequent out-of-home placements (see table 9). Although differences between the DDAP group and the comparison group were not statistically significant, the comparison group was

Table 6: Recidivism Rates of DDAP and Comparison Groups, by Risk Group and Degree of Recidivism

Risk Group*	Percentage of Youth: DDAP Group	Percentage of Youth: Comparison Group	Level of Significance
Low risk			$p<.001$
Serious recidivism	13.3%	49.1%	
Minor recidivism	16.1	13.6	
Low risk: Total recidivism	31.4	62.7	$p<.01$
High risk			$p<.001$
Serious recidivism	21.0	43.5	
Minor recidivism	11.8	14.9	
High risk: Total recidivism	32.8	58.4	$p<.001$

*Low risk=risk score of less than 10; high risk=risk score of 10 or more.

Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding. Number of referrals: 542.

Table 7: Percentage of Youth With One or More Subsequent Petitions, by Selected Variable (DDAP and Comparison Groups)

	Percentage of Youth	Level of Significance
Sample group		$p<.001$
DDAP	23.6%	
Comparison	47.8	
Age		$p<.05$
14 and under	45.2	
Over age 14	33.1	
Race/ethnicity		NS
Caucasian	40.6	
African American	35.8	
Other	33.5	
Sex		$p<.05$
Male	37.8	
Female	26.7	
Type of risk group		NS
High risk	35.2	
Low risk	38.9	
Number of prior referrals		$p<.001$
None	26.6	
One	29.4	
Two	42.2	
Three or more	49.1	
Type of prior referrals		$p<.001$
Serious	43.2	
Minor	31.1	
Number of prior placements		NS
One or more	35.7	
None	35.7	

Note: Number of referrals: 542. NS, not significant.

slightly more likely to have subsequent placements. Subsequent placements were also more likely for younger youth and for youth with the most prior referrals, the most serious prior referrals, and prior placements.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

If recidivism is used as the key measure of success, it appears that youth referred to DDAP have been more successful than those not referred. Recidivism, however, can have different meanings and can be measured in different ways. Given the available data (and absent data such as self-esteem and school grades, which were not available for this study), at least three measures can be used: a referral to court on a new offense (which can be further broken down to focus on violent offenses), a referral that results in an actual petition to go before the judge for possible adjudication, and a referral that results in out-of-home placement (e.g., group homes and institutions). By each of these three measures, the DDAP group is decidedly more successful.

Youth characteristics that were controlled for in the recidivism comparisons between the DDAP group and the comparison group did not vary significantly between the two groups, which suggests that differences in recidivism rates may not be attributable to differences in group characteristics. In fact, the DDAP group had higher risk scores and more prior placements than the comparison group, which would lead one to predict that the DDAP group would have higher, rather than lower, recidivism rates.

All the data from this study suggest that risk scores themselves are relatively poor predictors of outcome. Because accuracy of the assessment forms cannot be verified, the study's conclusion about risk scores must be based on existing risk scores. Nevertheless, when one puts the accuracy of risk scores aside, the fact remains that DDAP accepted youth, who conventional wisdom might dictate were a threat to public safety and who would have sat in detention for days or even weeks, had recidivism rates that were nearly 50 percent less than the comparison group. This supports the proposition that intensive supervision over an extended period of time, coupled with placement in community-based programs, enabled DDAP youth to lead relatively normal lives, while reducing the likelihood of further contact with the juvenile justice

Table 8: Percentage of Youth Referred to Court for Subsequent Violent Crimes, by Selected Variables (DDAP and Comparison Groups)

	Percentage of Youth	Level of Significance
Sample group		$p<.001$
DDAP	9.2%	
Comparison	24.7	
Age		$p<.001$
14 and under	34.8	
Over age 14	12.2	
Race/ethnicity		$p<.05$
Caucasian	17.4	
African American	20.6	
Other	10.7	
Sex		NS
Male	18.1	
Female	12.4	
Type of risk group		NS
High risk	14.1	
Low risk	19.3	
Number of prior referrals		$p<.05$
None	13.0	
One	13.4	
Two	18.8	
Three or more	23.9	
Type of prior referrals		$p<.05$
Serious	20.6	
Minor	14.8	
Number of prior placements		NS
One or more	15.5	
None	17.4	

Note: Number of referrals: 542. NS, not significant.

system. How many of the DDAP or comparison group later become adult offenders is not known.

Several reasons are offered for DDAP's apparent success. First, the caseloads of DDAP caseworkers are low in comparison with the caseloads of juvenile justice court probation officers. DDAP caseworkers average about 10 cases each at any one time, compared with 50 to 100 for court probation officers in major urban areas. Smaller caseloads typically result in more intensive supervision, and more intensive supervision means that the caseworker can be "on top of things" with regard to clients. Indeed, with small caseloads, caseworkers can spend more quality time with their clients in the field rather than in an office processing paperwork, talking on the telephone, and performing other bureaucratic tasks.

Second, the DDAP program is "out of the mainstream" of the juvenile justice system—a true "alternative" program rather than one of many bureaucratic extensions of the system.[1] Being out of the mainstream means that normal bureaucratic restrictions do not generally apply. For instance, the qualifications for being a caseworker with DDAP are not as strict as one might find within the juvenile justice system (e.g., age restrictions, educational requirements, absence of arrest records, and "street" experience—the caseworkers grew up in the same areas as did the clients). DDAP's caseworkers exhibited exceptional dedication to helping youth, and the backgrounds of DDAP workers were similar to the backgrounds of some of their clients (e.g., similar race/ethnicity, neighborhood of origin, and language).

Third, DDAP's physical location seemed more "user friendly" than the formal system (e.g., no bars, no concrete buildings, no devices for screening for weapons upon entering the building, and no cells for lockdown). Further, DDAP workers are not officers of the court, with powers of arrest and the usual accoutrements of such occupations (e.g., badges and guns).

A possible fourth explanation—drawn only from speculation because no relevant data are available—could be that because of DDAP's intensive supervision, caseworkers may be more likely to deflect potential problems. In addition, if a DDAP client is in a situation that could lead to arrest, a police officer may contact the DDAP caseworker, who may convince the officer that the situation could be handled without a formal arrest. If this scenario occurs with any degree of regularity, it may be a positive sign. Police often are willing to forego arrest if they believe that someone in authority is available to handle a youth informally. Usually, such youth are from more privileged backgrounds with ready access to adults willing to take responsibility for them. Many such youth have been saved the stigma of formal court processing through the intervention of significant adults in their lives. Perhaps DDAP caseworkers can perform that function for less privileged youth.

Recommendations for future research and programs include the following:

- Given the apparent success of DDAP, an overall expansion of the program seems warranted, especially for youth who have high risk scores or who otherwise would be predicted to be highly likely to engage in repetitive, serious delinquency. DDAP's findings support conclusions of other researchers in the matter of handling so-called dangerous youth within their own communities (e.g., Miller, 1996, 1998).
- Subsequent research should include indepth interviews of program participants and family members, DDAP caseworkers, and heads of agencies to whose programs DDAP clients were referred to get a clearer idea of why the program seemed to work and what services worked the best.
- Larger samples from both DDAP and comparison groups should be drawn

[1] That is, DDAP is a separate agency with separate funding and employees, whereas bureaucratic extensions are special programs (e.g., intensive supervision) with funding by the juvenile court and supervision by regular probation officers.

Table 9: Percentage of Youth Referred to DDAP for Subsequent Out-of-Home Placement

	Percentage of Youth	Levels of Significance
Sample group		NS
DDAP	18.1%	
Comparison	24.0	
Age		$p<.05$
14 and under	29.6	
Over age 14	18.7	
Race/ethnicity		NS
Caucasian	24.6	
African American	22.6	
Other	16.9	
Sex		NS
Male	21.5	
Female	19.0	
Type of risk group		NS
High risk	22.8	
Low risk	15.9	
Number of prior referrals		$p<.001$
None	13.0	
One	13.4	
Two	23.4	
Three or more	35.8	
Type of prior referrals		NS
Serious	27.3	
Minor	18.0	
Number of prior placements		$p<.05$
One or more	29.3	
None	18.8	

Note: Number of referrals: 542. NS, not significant.

and studied to try and replicate the findings.

- Youth in the sample group should be followed to their adult years to find out how many become adult offenders and how many subsequently are incarcerated in adult institutions.
- The factors that account for DDAP's apparent success should be examined. To what programs were nonrecidivists referred? What did their caseworkers do? In short, what did DDAP do on behalf of these youth that other programs did not do?
- A reassessment of the detention authority's existing risk assessment instrument seems warranted, with special attention to accuracy in filling out the instrument on referral to juvenile court. Subsequent research should address this problem, with emphasis on the predictive validity of the risk assessment instrument itself. Placing a youth in detention, or even referring a youth to the court system itself, is a serious step that can have far-reaching, often negative, consequences in that young person's life. A risk assessment instrument that uses a numerical scale, even if it is based on scientific research, should not passively be accepted as the last word. The assignment of a risk score (or any other objective numerical score) should not go unchallenged.
- DDAP should remain a true alternative agency to the formal juvenile justice system. The program should not become bureaucratized, co-opted, or otherwise influenced by existing bureaucracy. The best crime control is often conducted in the community without the participation of any formal bureaucratic system (Elias, 1993).

Policy Implications

The findings reported here have broad implications in terms of national and local policies. The past few decades have witnessed the emergence of a punitive attitude toward juvenile offenders. These "overapplied" policies (e.g., increased waivers of juveniles to the adult system and mandatory sentencing of juveniles) put some youth in facilities who could be served successfully in the community. Such policies have had a negligible effect on crime and have contributed to overcrowding in prisons, jails, and juvenile institutions. Some believe that such policies have also helped to expand an already large crime control "industry" (Shelden and Brown, 1997; Reiman, 1995; Donziger, 1996; Irwin and Austin, 1997).

Many policymakers continue to view the problems of crime and delinquency (and related problems such as drug and alcohol abuse) first and foremost as legal problems rather than as public health or social problems (Prothrow-Stith, 1991). Some progress has been made in shifting this view, but further progress is needed. Rarely does a purely legalistic approach address major root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of educational opportunities, unemployment, and racial inequality. In fact, it can be argued that such policies have exacerbated these problems (Miller, 1996).

One reason for the success of alternative programs such as DDAP may be that they tend to stress the strengths of at-risk youth rather than the weaknesses. The more traditional punitive approaches tend to emphasize the negative aspects of at-risk youth and focus on their faults and negative behaviors. Programs that focus on building strengths add to the resiliency of at-risk youth (Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller, 1992; Hawkins and Weis, 1985).

The program described in this Bulletin is not the solution to all juvenile justice problems, nor is it a quick fix. Additional research is required on this type of program—a diversion program operated by a separate agency—under varying conditions and in different geographic locations. Ideally, a longitudinal study should be undertaken that will use a true experimental design in which youth would be randomly assigned to DDAP or to regular juvenile justice programming.

Such extensive and long-term followups will shed more light on a complex issue.

For Further Information

Additional sources of information about detention diversion advocacy are provided below:

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